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Daily Highlights

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FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council authorizes deployment of 8,750 UNCRO troops in Croatia; calls for speedy conclusion of status of forces agreement.

+ Security Council pays tribute to ONUSAL as Mission nears termination; urges parties in El Salvador to cooperate in fulfilling all commitments under Peace Accords.

+ Secretary-General proposes United Nations programme budget of $2.51 billion for 1996-1997 biennium, down $109 million from 1994-1995.

+ Secretary-General meets with Australian Prime Minister in Canberra; Australia to participate in stand-by arrangements for peace-keeping.

+ Rwanda invites seven countries, OAU and UNAMIR to participate in commission to examine recent killings of internally displaced persons.

+ UNPROFOR reports increasing number of attacks against peace-keepers in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

+ Grassroots public participation is needed to achieve sustainability, Commission on Sustainable Development is told.

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The Security Council today authorized the deployment of 8,750 troops for the United Nations Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia (UNCRO). The Council approved the arrangements for implementation of the Operation's mandate set out in the Secretary-General's report of 18 April. It took that action, under Chapter VII of the Charter, by unanimously adopting resolution 990 (1995).

The Council reaffirmed its determination to ensure the security and freedom of movement of personnel of United Nations peace-keeping operations in the former Yugoslavia. It called on the Government of Croatia and the local Serb authorities to cooperate fully with UNCRO in the implementation of its mandate. The Council called on the Government to conclude an agreement on the

status of forces and other personnel as soon as possible. It also asked the Secretary-General to report to it by 15 May.

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In a second meeting today, the Council paid tribute to the accomplishments of the United Nation Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL), which will terminate on Sunday. In unanimously adopting resolution 991 (1995), it expressed satisfaction that El Salvador had evolved from a country riven by conflict into a democratic and peaceful nation.

The Council welcomed the continued commitment of the Government and people of El Salvador to reconciliation, stabilization and the development of political life. It urged the Government and the Frente Farabundo Marti para la Liberacion Nacional (FMLN) and all concerned to accelerate the pace of implementation of the Peace Accords. The Council also urged them to work together to fulfil outstanding commitments in order to ensure the irreversibility of the peace process.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has proposed a United Nations programme budget of $2.51 billion for the 1996-1997 biennium, according to the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management, Joseph Connor. He told correspondents at Headquarters today that the proposal would mean reducing spending by $109 million, or 4.2 per cent, from 1994-1995. That reduction would reflect efficiency savings of $35 million and the termination of certain activities. The savings would not mean changes in the output of the Organization, but changes in its least effective spending. Meanwhile, spending in certain priority areas would be increased by $19 million.

The proposed budget envisaged the abolition of 201 posts with the goal of making the United Nations leaner and better, Mr. Connor said. That figure included 150 support staff, many of whom were no longer needed because of technological developments. A total of 66 new posts would be created, including 14 in internal oversight. The reductions in spending and posts would not mean short-changing any United Nations mandates, but would mean implementing those mandates more efficiently.

The Secretary-General had identified four areas in which spending should be increased, Mr. Connor continued. Those areas were: international and regional cooperation for development, political affairs and peace-keeping, human rights and humanitarian affairs, and internal oversight services. He stressed that the United Nations needed a core capacity for peace-keeping and humanitarian activities, regardless of whatever operations were being undertaken at any given time. The proposed budget was a strong expression of the Secretary-General's vision of what the Organization should do.

Mr. Connor called attention to the critical financial situation of the United Nations, which required attention, innovation and brinkmanship. The Organization operated on minimum cash levels of $500 million, or six weeks

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spending. "We're constantly juggling", he said. "We have no reserves and no capital". He noted that the Secretary-General had repeatedly requested the creation of a reserve fund for the United Nations.

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Continuing his visit to Australia, the Secretary-General was in Canberra today, where he met with Prime Minister Paul Keating. Mr. Keating announced that Australia would participate in the stand-by arrangements for troops and equipment for United Nations peace-keeping, a decision which the Secretary-General welcomed. They also discussed the country's broader role in the United Nations system, and the economic and political prospects for the Asia-Pacific region.

The Secretary-General also had meetings with the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs and representatives of the United Nations Association of Australia. In remarks at the National Press Club, he reiterated that it was very difficult for the United Nations to operate in a chronic financial crisis. "The United Nations is bankrupt", he said, adding that most Member States did not pay their assessed contributions, or paid them late.

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The President of Rwanda has announced that an international commission will be set up to examine the recent killings at the Kibeho camp for internally displaced persons, according to a United Nations spokesman. The Rwandese Government will ask Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the United States, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) to participate with it in the commission. The Government hopes that the commission will begin its work next week.

Special Representative Shahryar Khan has expressed satisfaction with the commission's terms of reference, and has indicated that UNAMIR will cooperate with it, the spokesman said. The commission will seek to determine why the camps for internally displaced persons were closed down; if there was sufficient consultation with UNAMIR before the closures; if ethnicity was the root cause of problem; how the camps were closed; who was responsible for the events at Kibeho; and what was the role of the army and militia in the camps.

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There has been an increase in the number of attacks against personnel of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), a spokesman for the Organization said today. Four peace-keepers were fired at in Sarajevo yesterday, while one was targeted in Gorazde. However, no injuries were sustained in those incidents.

The spokesman deplored the attacks, which were obviously deliberate. He warned that if they continued, troop-contributors would think about withdrawing their contingents from UNPROFOR.

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Meanwhile, there was a slight decline in military activity in some parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, there were 1,100 firing incidents in Sarajevo over a 24-hour period, and continued fighting along the Posavina Corridor and in the area around Doboj.

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The Commission on Sustainable Development must be brought "out of the basement of the United Nations and into the streets of the people", according to Canada's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Environment, Sheila Copps. She told the third meeting of the Commission's High-level Segment that sustainability required grassroots public participation, particularly by non-governmental organizations, women, and indigenous groups.

The Minister of Housing Space and the Environment of the Netherlands, Margaretha de Boer, welcomed the establishment of the proposed intergovernmental panel on forests. Forests were one of the most important issues of the current session, she said. In no other sector were trade, industry, nature and socio-cultural issues so closely linked.

The Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Elizabeth Dowdeswell, said the Commission was "getting further and further from achieving a sustainable balance between humans and the environment". She stressed the importance of strengthening UNEP's role as a custodian of the environment and as a strong voice for its protection.

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